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ABSTRACT

An overview of the state of the art of women's studies covers a number of topics: the history of women's studies, a definition of them, types of programs and courses available, interdisciplinary programs, factors in establishing a program, teaching techniques, the effects of women's studies on students, and women's resource centers as a community outreach effort. A list of resources is included. (MSE)

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WOMEN IN THE CURRICULUM

This paper is based on a comprehensive study of existing literature concerning women's studies. It should not be viewed as an endorsement or recommendation but only as a description of activity in the area of women's education. An extensive bibliography of source materials is listed at the end of the paper.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic studies programs of various minority groups have found their way into the curriculum of numerous American colleges and universities. Awareness of the heritage and culture of minority groups is seen by many as having helped to create a receptive atmosphere for Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Indian Studies, etc., on the campus. In the view of many persons such studies helped correct myths and misconceptions about the group studied, and changed many attitudes, both in and outside academia.

In the same way, Women's Studies is seen by many women as the key to unlocking negative attitudes toward women. Women's Studies can perform two important functions:

- (1) Provide new knowledge about women, their history and accomplishments: In the scholarly tradition, academia must investigate old beliefs, examine changes in traditional roles, and new developments in society as they affect women.
- (2) Help women evaluate their role in society: A woman enrolled in Women's Studies is often prompted to think about how she fits into the social structure and what society wants her to be, and to think about what she wants herself to become. Insofar as a liberal arts education aims to develop the full capacities of an individual, then Women's Studies, like other minority studies, can be viewed as a crucial and essential part of liberal learning in helping women examine themselves as women.

The following pages describe the beginning of Women's Studies, types of studies programs, factors in establishing a program, teaching Women's Studies and the impact of such studies on students, extending the program to a larger community. A list of resources for Women's Studies is also included.

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Women's Studies: How They Began and Why

The reawakening and resurgence of the feminist movement developed quietly along with the civil rights movement; the scholarly arm of the new wave of feminism followed closely the debut of Black Studies on American university and college campuses.

Women's Studies has spread across the country in a few short years. In December 1970 the Modern Language Association's Commission on the Status of Women published the first Guide to Current Female Studies, which listed over 110 courses. In its Fall 1971 Guide the Commission lists over 600 courses.

When Women's Studies courses first began in 1969 they were offered singly in separate departments (e.g., Dr. Florence Howe's course at Goucher College, "Identity and Expression," teaching writing to women; Dr. Ann Scott's course in English at SUNY at Buffalo; the study of sex roles in a Home Economics department, or a seminar on medieval woman in a history department). By 1971, many institutions had expanded their women's studies courses into complete programs, such as those at San Diego State College and Cornell University. Several colleges were offering a bachelor's degree in Women's Studies: for example, Richmond College (N.Y.), the University of Washington, Douglass College (N.J.) and San Francisco State College. The Cambridge-Goddard Institute offers the M. A. in Women's Studies, and in the Fall of 1972, Sarah Lawrence began a graduate study program that includes a master's in women's history. The University of Iowa also offers graduate work.

Like Black Studies and other minority studies, Women's Studies is viewed by many as an attempt to re-examine a group about which very little real facts are known. For instance, some professors of history observe that in history textbooks the suffrage movement is often treated with flippancy or used as comic relief, and that although valid technological, scientific and social contributions made by women are often overlooked, the relationships of wives and/or mistresses and historical figures is very seldom omitted. In the study of law, they point out that it is seldom taught that the Constitution was designed for white men of property only, excluding black slaves, white indentured servants, and all women. Often the assumptions of Freud about women have been taught without questioning Freud's possible bias against women. Stereotypes of women, from "earth mother" to "idealistic angel", are only sometimes recognized and dealt with honestly in literature courses. In short, many advocates for women's studies maintain that the social sciences, history, economics, anthropology, literature, political science -- all have been studied and seen with the "male" eye. Until recently, textbooks paid little attention to women,* scholarly contributions of women have been neglected, and research about women, done by women, was discouraged. The approach to knowledge which excludes women and their contributions is now being questioned as women have begun to break through the maze of myths which have so long handicapped them.

Women's Studies: What Is It?

Sheila Tobias, Associate Provost at Wesleyan University, has defined Women's Studies as

*In one study of textbooks used in college history courses, no book devoted more than 2% of its pages to women; one had only 5/100 of 1% of its pages devoted to women.

"the intellectual examination of the absence of women from history; the fresh look in a non-Freudian way at the social psychology of woman; the study of women in literature and the images of women in the arts; the economic and legal history of the family and speculation about ... societies where sex differences are minimized."¹ Women's Studies has been further defined by many not only as an academic endeavor, but also as a way of helping women students understand themselves as women.

At the first Midwest Conference on Women's Studies held at Alverno College (Milwaukee) in October 1971 the participants, 104 of them from virtually every major university and college in the Midwest, issued the following policy statements at the final conference session:²

- (1) Women's Studies is a legitimate academic enterprise at every level of education;
- (2) Women's Studies is integrally related to the status of all women on every campus and ... in the larger community;
- (3) That since education has been heretofore predicted on male values... we shall work to correct the biases and omissions in all educational materials;
- (4) That new research and the reinterpretation of old research on and about women, sex roles, etc., is urgent and must get institutional support and funding.

The conferees went beyond these academic aims, however, and reached out to make social impact. They went on to recommend that:

"Women Studies ... should be innovative and use consciousness-raising and other experiential techniques in teaching..." and "that continuing education programs in women's studies should be expanded to meet the needs of women, especially those outside current financial aids structures."

Those involved in planning and teaching women's studies are generally agreed that, in addition to scholarly endeavor, a major aim is to create an education for women that will begin to meet the real needs of women. This education is not seen as only limited to academic and scholarly endeavor but is also seen as an ongoing process to change the ways in which women think about themselves as women, and to help them overcome the handicaps of being raised in a sexist society.

Types of Women's Studies Programs and Courses

Even though Women's Studies is seen as having effected positive change in many women students (and men students to a lesser degree), the proponents are concerned that Women's Studies must also justify its existence as a legitimate academic field, that it make a strong and valid contribution to the body of research in all fields involved, and continue to serve the needs of women in the world at large.

¹Sheila Tobias, "Educating Women for Leadership," Know, Inc., Pittsburgh, Pa.

²Midwest Conference on Women's Studies, "Notes", Research Center on Women, Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October, 1971.

Introducing and weaving material about women into an appropriate course already in the curriculum is often done without any added expense to the institution. For instance, in the field of English and Literature, most teachers are fairly well equipped to deal with the role, contributions, images and treatment of women. This is fertile ground for a bevy of specific courses:

"Changing Role of Women in Literature" -- Alverno College

"Contemporary American Women Writers" -- Bowling Green State University

"Female Archetypes" -- Goucher College

"Literary Perspectives on Women" -- Johns Hopkins University

"Daughters and Ducats" (the examination of women as chattel in the 18th and 19th Centuries) -- Mount Holyoke College

"Linguistic Behavior of Male and Female" -- University Extension, University of California at Irvine

"Women by Women" -- University Extension, University of California at San Francisco

"Heroines in English" -- Chico State College, California

"Women Writers and Women's Problems" -- Wellesley College

Other disciplines also lend themselves conveniently to individual courses in women's studies. The New Guide to Female Studies lists eighty course with a history base and another eighty-five with a social science or sociology base. Additionally, the fields of psychology, education and anthropology normally have a good deal of research that is often utilized in women's studies. In the non-verbal arts, attention can be focussed on women composers, musicians and painters. Theatre and dance have been heavily influence by women; what is needed is a thorough and sharp examination of this influence. For most faculty, curriculum in women's studies is not at all difficult to come by: it involves a change in focus, supplementary research and constant questioning of traditional principles of a discipline.

Another approach to initiating Women's Studies is the team approach: two or more teachers in differing fields sharing one course. The Cornell University course, "The Evolution of Female Personality: History and Aspects" is a good example of this form. The semester Included (I) Status of Women, (II) History of Women, and (III) Image of Women. Lectures covered such topics as the legal status of women, biological differences between men and women, history of women, woman's image in the arts, future perspectives in utopian literature, cross-cultural analysis, prostitution, power play in family life, urbanization, influence of architecture and planning, the black woman's struggle, a psychological viewpoint, life styles and "prospects for androgeny." The Cornell course, taught by two professors, included a number of guest lecturers. Very often professors have found that there is much natural overlapping in courses on women, so that the multidisciplinary treatment is useful in many cases.

Any of these approaches may lead to a department of Female Studies or a Women's Studies program which typically is a separate and sometimes completely independent academic entity. Some educators have shied away from establishing a separate program,

fearing the harm that "specialness" can render to educating women. Their fear is that there will be a replay of the fate of the old "women's studies" of the early part of this century, Home Economics. Originally a movement towards more research about women, done for and by women, and tackled with fervency and seriousness, these early "home economics" departments sometimes found themselves separated and isolated from the rest of the ivy-covered world, often suffering loss in status and prestige. To avoid this happening again, some colleges have incorporated women's studies into the regular departmental curriculum, rather than separating the subject matter into a single course. Others have established individual courses in the curriculum and feel that this is the best way. Still others have done both: integrating women's subjects into existing curriculum courses and establishing new courses at the same time.

Example of Interdisciplinary Programs

Setting up an interdisciplinary department or program of women's studies is often done on a cooperative basis. At Cornell University, the Female Studies Program (Spring 1971) offered the following courses jointly sponsored with many departments and colleges within the University:

- "Evolution of Female Personality" -- College of Human Ecology
- "The Representation of Women in Literature" -- College of Arts and Sciences
- "Sociology of the Female Labor Force" -- New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- "Women in Society," a seminar section of biological science -- Division of Biological Science
- "Women in Education" -- New York State College of Agriculture, Department of Education

Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Smith and the University of Massachusetts jointly developed the Five College Program in Women's Studies. The courses offered in the Five College Program include:

- (1) courses dealing primarily with women and taught under the auspices of a particular department by a person trained in a specific discipline
- (2) courses which deal with sex roles or male-female relations in general, such as "Sex and Sex Roles in Changing Society"
- (3) courses on the women's movement
- (4) field courses which have units on women (e.g., Soviet Political Life, The American Voice in Poetry)
- (5) discipline courses which ordinarily are assumed to deal primarily with women (e.g., "Marriage and the Family")

The Radical Feminist Studies Program at the Cambridge-Goddard Graduate School for Social Change offers a unique Female Studies program. The program is basically a series of seminars from which each student chooses one. The "seminar" is the meeting time for a project which is the fulltime work of its members for at least one year. The list of seminars is flexible, determined by the number of students showing interest in a certain seminar. (A minimum of four persons is suggested.) All but two of the seminars are open to women only.* The seminar on child-rearing is open to both sexes, the seminar on male sex roles is open to men only.

Other Women's Studies programs have chosen to include the practical along with the scholarly. The Chicago Liberation School for Women (a project of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union and not affiliated with any university), and the Feminist Studies Program at Goddard College offer such practicalities as auto mechanics, organizing, "fix-it", karate, marksmanship, medical survival, and wrestling. These kinds of courses are considered by many as legitimate in a Women's Studies program that sees itself as filling in the gaps in training and educating women for life in modern society. At Goddard, these courses are offered on a 2-3 week basis throughout the trimester.

Establishing a Women's Studies Program

A review of existing programs suggests that questions of program, structure, purpose, control and revenue are often raised. (There are seventeen "life stories" of Women's Studies programs in Female Studies III.) Examples of such questions are:

- (1) Why is a women's studies program needed? Who will it be for: men, women, teachers, students, the community-at-large?
- (2) What is the level of awareness and "woman-consciousness" that exists on the campus? Have lectures, films, short-term non-credit seminars and other women's awareness programs been enthusiastically accepted and attended? Have these led to requests for more of the same?
- (3) How will the curriculum be structured? Traditionally planned? Student defined?
- (4) What resources are available? Are there faculty who are equipped to undertake a women's studies course? Are there adequate library and research facilities?
- (5) How will learning and teaching be directed? Team teaching? Collective research? Action-oriented?
- (6) Who will control the program? University administrators? A salaried director? The program's faculty? A mixed committee? A specific department? Women students and women staff? Women and men students?
- (7) Will other activities be sponsored by the Program? (Conferences, festivals

*Courses limited to one sex may be in violation of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (Higher Education Act), effective July 1, 1972.

in the arts, speakers, research projects)?

- (8) What is the evaluation process: who shall judge? On what basis?
- (9) Will the courses be credit or non-credit? Degree-giving: B.A., M.A., beyond?
- (10) How much funding and space is needed? What services will the program provide? (Meeting space, counseling, library facilities)
- (11) What will be the breadth of the course offering? Liberal arts and sciences? Fine Arts? Applied Arts? All?
- (12) What will be the relationship with other minority studies programs? How can competition be avoided? What kinds of co-operative efforts can be made?
- (13) What are the short and long-range goals: is Women's Studies to continue forever? Does offering a degree in Women's Studies give a sound basis for further study for the student?
- (14) Shall Women's Studies be an end in itself, making a place for itself as a bona fide academic field, or shall it serve as a means to an end, eventually incorporating womankind into the body of knowledge?

Teaching Women's Studies

From its earliest beginnings, teachers of Women's Studies have shown a considerable interest in the method and quality of teaching as well as in the subject matter itself. Because the subject is one which touches every one in a personal way, teaching women's studies may present unique problems. For example, many professors, both female and male, feel that in classes that include both sexes, women may act in a traditionally passive way and "allow" male students to "take over" the class. Teachers report that frequently some males may enroll in the class for less than serious reasons, and that some students of both sexes may become defensive, hostile and anxious as deep-seated values and beliefs are examined and questioned.

Since the field itself is new and (somewhat) experimental, new and innovative teaching methods are thought to be especially appropriate. Many teachers have used a variety of methods, such as the following, to help overcome some of the problems that may arise in the classroom:

Collective teaching and research: This may be especially workable in a multi-disciplinary course, being supportive and productive for the teachers involved.

Sharing personal experiences: This is seen as helping to increase confidence in women students and lessening hostility in men. However, teachers of Women's Studies are quick to point out that such experiences need to be integrated into a scholarly framework.

Low emphasis on student competition: The self-grading or no-grading system may help foster confidence and earnestness in students. Some experts have noted that

It's one pitfall is that it may tend to lessen the legitimacy of the course or program in the eyes of the larger academic community.

Increased emphasis on the personal: Through such projects as diaries and journals many proponents feel that women students can learn to express in writing their feelings and increase their perception about their lives as females. Apparently some male students are sometimes reluctant to participate in diary-keeping, but professors note that when they do, they are often made more aware of the cultural impact on the sexes, and begin to see the relevancy of women's studies to their own lives.

Increased cooperative atmosphere in the classroom: Some teachers do not wish to use already established "traditional" styles of lecture, grade competition, testing, etc., and have sought to make an environment of cooperative learning through team research papers and projects, smaller discussion groups from the class, and other shared activities outside the formal classroom. These techniques are viewed as giving the student more responsibility for her (or his) education, and decreasing the passivity that is sometimes nurtured by the lecture-examination system.

Role-playing: Several teachers of Women's Studies feel that this promotes understanding of the experiences of the self and others, lessens the sense of isolation many students feel, and increases empathy and the cooperative spirit of the class.

Constructive teacher approaches: By changing vocabulary, awareness of the status of women is often heightened in both teacher and student. Female students are addressed as "women", not "girls", and when speaking of people in general, "person" is used rather than "man", "humankind" rather than "mankind." Some teachers have found that addressing students and being addressed by them on a first name basis further decreases the separation between student and teacher and increases rapport. The female teacher is advised against taking sides against male students, and to work to create a positive image of the female scholar. Similarly, the male teacher is advised against taking sides or being overly authoritarian, especially with female students. Both female and male teachers are urged to confront their own concepts, stereotypes and prejudices about women before undertaking a class. Proponents point out that constant sensitizing is needed for both female and male professors since they have been trained in a system that is male-oriented.

Those involved in Women's Studies courses and programs strongly note that it takes a sensitive, flexible, and creative teacher to guide students in Women's Studies. The subject is so close to the lives of women and men that it is difficult to divorce it and isolate it as a completely academic matter. In approaching a class, teachers are urged to be concerned about student motivation and awareness: who is there and where they are in terms of the women's issue. A radical feminist will have a different perspective and different motives from a traditional upper middle-class male; a young woman from a minority group will present different problems from a middle-aged woman returning to the campus after childrearing. Many of those who teach Women's Studies feel that no matter what teaching method or discipline is involved, Women's Studies can never be a totally barren experience for anyone, teacher or student.

All of these experimental devices and methods have been used in varying degrees with the traditional tools: syllabi, reading lists, term papers, special projects, quizzes, examinations, lectures.

Teacher Workshops: At Alverno College workshops were held for 90 faculty (and administrators) to help them become better informed and sensitive to areas of change in male-female relationships and women's education. The workshop utilized a variety of methods including self-study questionnaires, visual aids, theatre, and discussion groups. New legal rights, job opportunities and life styles for women were examined. Participants evaluated the education content of the College and suggested ways of incorporating Women's Studies into the existing curriculum. Each teacher was asked to submit a written description of their course and how women would be integrated in the curriculum (where appropriate), where women as contributors and scholars would be included, and how the course could be related to vocational choice. Workshops of this kind are viewed as being constructive and supportive to teachers of Women's Studies, as well as actively engaging faculty in the process of reevaluating curriculum.

The Effect of Women's Studies on Students

Virtually all Women's Studies teachers report that their students react positively to Women's Studies courses, and often leave such courses having grown intellectually and emotionally. They feel that it is almost impossible for students of either sex to participate in women's studies -- be it literature, law, the media, biology -- without experiencing some change in thought or attitude.

Women's Studies seems to have often served as a "counseling catalyst". For example, at Queens College (N.Y.) after taking the course, "The Women's Movement," several women students began to plan careers beyond housewifery, and many men students found it possible to consider career choices not traditionally "masculine," such as primary school teaching.

Women's Studies can have great value in giving women a more positive sense of self-esteem and increased confidence in their abilities. Teachers claim that for many women, such courses offer new options and clarify what being a woman is, in all aspects of modern life; and that this is where the real great potential of Women's Studies lies: helping women break free of binding stereotypes. Very often the end result may be a change in attitude and a rethinking of projected goals among women students. Professor Gerda Lerner writes that several students in her seminar, "The Many Worlds of Women," indicated in their evaluation of the course at term's end that their lives had undergone change, and as a result, they were more open to different options of life patterns, different ways of utilizing opportunities, and several had raised their education and occupational goals. Other teachers of Women's Studies have reported similar changes in their students.

The impact of Women's Studies, successfully taught, can be far-reaching. Advocates of Women's Studies feel that the woman student who knows the status of women throughout history, from chattel to second-class citizen, is more likely to be aware of the numerous inequities that exist in society today, and is more likely to deal effectively with such inequities in a firm, realistic way, while working for positive change.

Women's Studies is seen by many of its proponents to have a strong impact on the academic world. Whether it remains a separate field of study or eventually becomes incorporated into other fields, textbooks, history books, and anthologies, are being reevaluated as women press upon authors and publishers for more equitable treatment and balanced coverage. As one woman said: "The professor who is not involved in Women's Studies may find a new kind of female student in his classes. The student who feels as worthy as her male

colleague will not so easily sit quietly by while her intellect is demeaned and/or ignored. She will not be easily discouraged from further study. The university world will have to find a place for this woman scholar; she will demand that she be listened to; and she will demand her place in academia."

Women's Resource Centers: Reaching Out to the Community of Women

Academic bodies which have involved themselves in Women's Studies on the basis of seeing the need for new research, new approaches and interpretations of old research, and a new education for women by women, may eventually want to extend their programs to reach other women as well as on-campus students.

For the working woman, the older woman, the mother, the woman who may be committed to volunteer activities during day hours, and the high school student, a selection of courses could be made available during the evening hours and on weekends, just as many classes offered in continuing education programs are scheduled. Some courses can be offered on a non-credit basis for women who may be hesitant about continuing or re-entering the academic world. The Cambridge-Goddard School allows a person who does not want a degree to enroll as long as she or he can make a full commitment to the program in women's studies. Mini- or short-term courses have also been found to be useful.

Scholarships and/or loan money could be made available to help low-income women attend. Availability of child care services, night and day, will need to be explored. A central meeting place will be needed if response from the community is large. Such a center affords an opportunity for women to come together and exchange ideas, an activity that is often crucial in determining the success of a course or program. A center would also provide a pivotal place for additional services, such as counseling, job placement, clinics, conferences, festivals. The Women's Center at Barnard College not only offers a varied program in Women's Studies, but has also co-sponsored a lecture on women in prisons, research work in Women's Studies, and is planning to offer legal services to women. The Center for Women's Studies and Services at San Diego State held its second women's art festival in April of this year.

The public can be made aware of these extended services and options through church groups, elementary and secondary schools and related parent organizations; hospitals, community clubs, even beauty parlors. Women -- all women, all races, all ages -- need to have the opportunity to discover themselves.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

RESOURCES FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

Publications:

Women's Studies Abstracts, edited by Sara Stauffer Whaley, P. O. Box 1, Rush, New York 14543. An abstract of periodical articles about women. Subscriptions: \$7.50 yearly.

Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal. Provides a forum for presentation of scholarship and criticism about women in the fields of literature, history, art, sociology, and other disciplines. Contact editor Wendy Martin, Department of English, Queens College, University of New York. Subscription: \$10 yearly.

Feminist Studies. A new journal to encourage analytic responses to feminist issues that open new areas of feminist research and critique. Editor, Ann Calderwood, 606 W. 116th Street, New York, New York 10027. Subscription: \$6 yearly.

Female Studies I. Gives 17 course description and bibliographies, chiefly social science. Available from KNOW, Inc., Box 86031, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221, \$2.00 + 25¢ postage.

Female Studies II. Gives 66 course descriptions and bibliographies plus five essays. Available from KNOW (address above), \$4.00 + 25¢ postage.

Female Studies III. Includes the New Guide to Current Female Studies, 54 new course descriptions and bibliographies, descriptions of 17 Women's Studies programs. Available from KNOW, \$4.25 + 25¢ for postage.

Female Studies IV. Includes an overview of Feminist Studies and seven essays on teaching; also several bibliographical reports and reviews of current anthologies. Available from KNOW, \$2.00 + 25¢ for postage.

Female Studies V. Contains 15 essays from the Pittsburgh Conference on Women and Education. Available from KNOW, \$4.50 + 25¢ for postage.

The New Guide to Current Female Studies. Lists over 600 Women's Studies courses. Available from KNOW, 75¢ + 25¢ for postage.

Women's Studies: A Program for Colleges and Universities by Dr. Elizabeth Farians. Examines the role of the university in educating women, gives guidelines for establishing an Institute for Women's Studies, and three sample curricula. Available from Dr. Farians, 6125 Webbland Place, Cincinnati, Ohio 45213.

Publishing Houses and Libraries:

The Feminist Press. A non-profit, tax-exempt organization publishing a variety of material, including reprints appropriate for use in Women's Studies courses. Address: Box 344, Old Westbury, New York 11568.

KNOW, Inc. A women's free press. Write for price lists of reprints from articles, speeches, list of major offerings; bulletin on Women's Studies also available. Address: P. O. Box 86031, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221.

Women's History Research Center. Contains one of the most complete archives of material by and about the women's movement. Information and a brochure are available upon request. Address: 2325 Oak Street, Berkeley, California 94708.

Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Offers one of the largest collections of source material on the history of American women, particularly strong in the area of social justice.

Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Library, Northampton, Massachusetts. A major research facility containing material relating to women's social and intellectual history. The collection is readily accessible to adult researchers. The staff tries to answer a limited number of research questions by mail.

See Female Studies V for a complete listing of smaller library collections.